

# CHAPTER 5

## ASSIGNING SAFETY AND HEALTH RESPONSIBILITIES

### INTRODUCTION

As a business owner or manager, you have ultimate accountability for the safety and health of your employees. You cannot delegate this accountability to others in your company. You can, however, expect others to share the responsibility for certain elements of the safety and health program.

If you own or manage a small operation, you may be questioning why you should share the responsibility for safety and health. You have a strong working knowledge of your business' everyday problems, and you are close to your employees. However, as your business grows and your workforce increases, being responsible for all the details of an effective safety and health program may become less feasible. It will be important to have a mechanism for delegating some of that responsibility.

For managers of large organizations, a method of clearly assigning safety and health responsibilities, authority and resources is an absolute necessity.

We recommend that you make use of written job descriptions. These documents can effectively:

- Clarify the specific safety and health responsibilities and authority of individuals, and
- Distribute responsibilities between supervisors and rank and file employees.

In this Chapter, we discuss how to develop useful job descriptions that spread safety and health responsibilities throughout your organization. You will need to:

- Review your existing organizational structure,
- Decide what part each position should play in your safety and health management system and what level of authority and resources will be needed,
- Decide and assign the responsibilities for each position, and
- Discuss assigned responsibilities with the people involved.

### THE VALUE OF WRITTEN JOB DESCRIPTIONS

An individual job description describes the most important characteristics and responsibilities of a position. An organization's job descriptions, when viewed collectively, describe the total company structure and work systems including the safety and health management system.

You may already have written job descriptions for all the positions in your company. This chapter will help you develop a safety and health section to add to these personnel documents and to include in your overall safety and health program. While some small businesses do not rely on written job descriptions, we believe that written statements are preferable to oral assignments with respect to safety and health responsibilities. Carefully written documents:

- Remove any doubt about the responsibilities and authority of each position;
- Enhance communication and coordination among jobs;
- Aid in determining whether all responsibilities have been accounted for within the organization and whether new tasks and responsibilities should be assigned; and
- Aid in developing job performance objectives and establishing performance measurements.

## REVIEW THE EXISTING ORGANIZATION

Within every business, there are people who should be involved in carrying out the safety and health program. On a sheet of paper or a form like the Appendix 5-1 Worksheet, list all the positions in your business. Use a separate sheet for each position. (You can group similar positions later.) See Appendix 5-2 for descriptions of the basic positions normally involved in a safety and health program.

## DETERMINE THE SAFETY AND HEALTH ROLE OF EACH POSITION

What role do you want each position or group of positions to play in your safety and health program? What level of authority will the person holding this position need? Write a general statement of overall responsibility and authority for each position. This statement will correspond to the first three entries on the Appendix 5-1 Worksheet.

While authority is built into managerial and supervisory positions, you may want to make changes specifically relating to your safety and health program. If so, be sure you clearly state the scope of authority by showing supervisory relationships, the amount of money the position holder can spend or any other measures that describe what a person in this position can do without obtaining further approval. At this stage, do not attempt to describe in detail each job's specific safety and health tasks. Here are some examples of safety and health roles:

The Owner: establishes and provides the leadership and resources for carrying out the stated company safety and health policy.

Managers and Supervisors: maintain safety and healthful working conditions within their respective jurisdictions and relay safety information/policy.

Employees: exercise care within their work to prevent injuries to themselves and to their co-workers.

Visitors, Vendors, Customers, and Subcontractors: comply with all safety and health regulations while on the premises.

The people with responsibility in the following areas may have some additional general duties:

Safety: be fully responsible to the owner or manager for the direction and day-to-day operation of the safety and health policy.

Engineering: ensure that all equipment that could affect the safety and health of employees is selected, installed and maintained in a way that eliminates or controls potential hazards.

Purchasing: ensure that safety and health equipment and materials are purchased in a timely manner; and that new materials, parts, and equipment are analyzed for potential hazards so that preventive measures or controls can be implemented; and that such materials, parts and equipment are obtained in accord with all applicable safety and health requirements.

## DETERMINE AND ASSIGN SPECIFIC RESPONSIBILITIES

You have decided who should be involved in your safety and health program. Now you need to develop written statements that specify what each person must do to help you meet program goals. This corresponds to the last entry on the Appendix 5-1 Worksheet.

Refer to Appendix 5-2 for some suggested safety and health responsibilities of several categories of employee. This is appropriate wording for job descriptions. Which of these responsibilities fit into your program? At what authority level and to which specific positions within your business should these responsibilities be assigned.

When writing out responsibilities for non-supervisory employees, be careful not to confuse these responsibilities with specific work rules and safe work practices. A brief, general statement about the employee's responsibility to understand and follow rules and safe work practices is more appropriate.

You should delegate the details for carrying out your safety and health program to the same people who are responsible for plant operations and production. In this way you build safety and health into the complete management system as firmly as production. Be sure that each assigned responsibility comes with the authority and resources needed to fulfill it.

## COMMUNICATE WITH YOUR EMPLOYEES

After you have clarified the safety and health responsibilities of each position, you must discuss this information to your employees. You may find it useful to combine all these written statements of safety and health responsibility into a single document. Then post it or circulate it to all employees involved. Discuss the job descriptions and responsibilities in face-to-face meetings with the employees who will be responsible for carrying out the program. Keep a copy of this document and periodically refer to it when meeting with employees for performance reviews.

## SUMMARY

For your safety and health program to succeed, you need to delegate responsibility to specific positions, departments and staff levels within your company. Follow these steps:

- Review your existing structure.
- Decide what part each job position should have within the overall safety and health program, and what authority and resources are needed to carry out this role.
- Determine and assign safety and health responsibilities and write these responsibilities into each position's job description.
- Communicate with the employees involved by discussing the responsibilities and authority in face-to-face meetings and circulated documents.

**APPENDIX 5-1**

**WORKSHEET  
SAFETY AND HEALTH PROGRAM RESPONSIBILITIES**

All employees will be fully responsible for carrying out the provisions of our safety and health policy that pertain to operations under their jurisdiction. The responsibilities listed below are our minimum expectations. We encourage individual initiatives to curb losses.

JOB TITLE: \_\_\_\_\_

GENERAL STATEMENT: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

LIMITS OF AUTHORITY AND RESOURCES (Expenditures, reporting, authority to shut down equipment):

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

THE EMPLOYEE WILL BE RESPONSIBLE FOR AND HELD ACCOUNTABLE FOR:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## PRESIDENT/OWNER/SITE MANAGER

- Establish a policy to hold the worksite in compliance with all applicable Federal or State standards and to provide safe and healthful work and working conditions for every person at the site.
- Provide the leadership and resources to carry out the stated company safety and health policy.
- Set objectives and support safety and health personnel and employees in their request for information, training, experts, facilities, tools, and equipment needed to conduct an effective program and to establish a safe and health workplace.
- Assign clear responsibility for the various aspects of the safety and health program. Ensure that employees with assigned responsibilities have adequate resources and authority to perform their duties.
- Hold employees accountable (including managers and supervisors) by evaluating performance to make sure they are meeting their responsibilities and by correcting or rewarding them, as appropriate.
- Keep in touch with employees and the company's safety and health activities, assist in giving direction and authority for those activities, and visibly show your involvement.
- Set a good example by following safety and health rules and safe work practices.
- Require all vendors, customers, subcontractors and visitors to comply with the company safety and health policy.
- Thoroughly understand the hazards and potential hazards that employees may be exposed to at the worksite. Ensure that a comprehensive program of prevention and control is set up and operating.
- Provide a reliable system for employees to report to appropriate managers any conditions and situations that appear hazardous. Ensure that responses to such reports are appropriate and timely.
- Encourage employees to use the established hazard reporting system(s). Guarantee a strict prohibition of retribution for all employees, supervisors and managers who use the system(s).
- Review the results of the self-inspection system periodically to ensure proper and timely hazard correction.
- Review accident reports to keep informed of causes and trends.
- Provide a medical program, emergency response system and first aid facilities adequate for the size and hazards of the worksite.
- Require periodic drills to ensure that each employee knows what to do in case of an emergency.
- Establish training programs that improve the ability of all employees, including managers and supervisors, to recognize and understand hazards and to protect themselves and others.

## SAFETY AND HEALTH DIRECTOR/COORDINATOR

- Maintain safety and health expertise through training, treading, conferences and use of outside experts.
- Keep informed of and be able to interpret laws and standards dealing with employee risk reduction in this industry and illness and injury record keeping requirements.
- Act as the eyes, ears, and “conscience” of top management where employee safety and health are concerned.
- Working with managers, supervisors, hourly employees and experts as needed, develop a complete inventory of hazards and potential hazards, and plan a program of prevention and control.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the plant preventive maintenance program in ensuring a safe and healthful workplace.
- Conduct a hazard analysis that includes hazard detection and plans for prevention or control whenever new equipment, facilities or materials are designed, purchased or used, and whenever new processes are designed.
- Establish a self-inspection program which insures timely hazard correction.
- Monitor company performance and progress toward established goals.
- Provide technical assistance and support to production supervisors and employees in their safety and health activities.
- Assist management to ensure that appropriate general plant safety and health rules are developed, communicated and understood.
- Assist in or oversee the development of a system for consistent and firm enforcement of the rules and safe work practices.
- Assist management in providing adequate equipment for personal protection, industrial hygiene, safety and fire prevention.
- Inspect and/or assist in inspection of facilities to detect hazards that may have escaped established prevention and control mechanisms and to uncover any previously undetected hazards.
- Assist supervisors in investigating accidents and incidents such as property damage and near misses.
- Provide technical assistance to employees in the performance of their duties under the safety and health program.
- Assist in developing and providing safety and health training to all employees so that they will understand the hazards of the workplace and their responsibility to protect themselves and others.
- Oversee, analyze and critique periodic emergency drills to improve worksite emergency readiness.

## PLANT SUPERINTENDENTS/DIVISION MANAGERS/DIRECTORS

- Establish a plant preventive maintenance program to ensure proper care and functioning of equipment and facilities.
- Provide the leadership and direction essential to maintain safety and health as part of the production efficiency equation.
- Hold all subordinate supervisors accountable for all assigned safety and health responsibilities, including their responsibility to ensure that employees under their direction comply with all safety and health policies, procedures and rules.
- Evaluate the safety and health performance of subordinate supervisors, taking into account completion of assigned safety activities and indicators of good performance: low injury and illness experience; good housekeeping; a creative, cooperative involvement in safety and health activities; a positive approach to safety and health problems and solutions; and a willingness to implement recommendations of professionals.
- Ensure the safety of the physical plant including structural features, equipment and the working environment. Insist that a high level of housekeeping be maintained, that safe working procedures be established, and that employees follow these procedures and apply good judgement to the hazardous aspects of all tasks. Participate in regular inspections of the plant to observe safety and health conditions and to communicate with employees. Offer positive reinforcement and instruction during these tours, and require correction of any hazards.
- Actively participate in and support employee participation in safety and health program activities. Provide timely and appropriate follow-up to recommendations made by any employee (or joint labor-management) group operating under the safety and health management system.
- Make certain that all new facilities, equipment, materials and processes are analyzed for potential hazards before completion of design or purchase, that all potential hazards are prevented or controlled before their introduction into the worksite, that tools and machinery are used as designed, and that all equipment is properly maintained.
- Coordinate with the safety director to ensure that job hazard analyses are conducted periodically for all jobs, with particular emphasis on tasks known to be dangerous, so that hazards can be uncovered and prevented or controlled.
- Make sure that employees know about and are encouraged to use systems for reporting hazards and making safety and health suggestions, that they are protected from harassment, that their ideas are genuinely considered, and that their ideas are adopted when helpful and feasible.
- Ensure that prompt corrective action is taken whenever and wherever hazards are recognized or unsafe acts are observed.
- Make sure that all hazardous tasks are covered by specific safe work procedures or rules to minimize injury.
- Provide all necessary safety and health equipment and protective devices, and make sure employees understand and use them properly.

- Ensure that all injured persons, regardless of how minor the injuries, receive prompt and appropriate medical treatment.
- Ensure that all accidents and incidents are promptly reported, thoroughly investigated and properly recorded, and that safety incentive programs do not discourage reporting of any incident that must be recorded on the log.
- Keep abreast of accident and injury trends. Take proper corrective action, when needed, to reverse these trends.
- Ensure that all employees are physically qualified to perform their work.
- Make sure that all employees are trained and, when necessary, retrained to recognize and understand hazards and to follow safe work procedures for each hazardous job.
- Ensure that supervisors hold periodic safety and health meetings to review and analyze the causes of accidents/incidents and to promote free discussion of hazardous work problems and possible solutions.
- Help develop and implement emergency procedures. Make sure that all employees have opportunities to practice their emergency duties.

#### SUPERVISORS

- Supervise and evaluate worker performance, including each worker's safety and health behavior and work methods.
- Encourage and actively support employee involvement in the safety and health management system. Provide positive reinforcement and recognition to outstanding individual and group performance.
- Obtain and maintain up-to-date knowledge and skills required to detect safety and health violations and other hazards, such as improperly functioning machinery, tools, or equipment.
- Maintain good housekeeping in your work area.
- Ensure that the plant preventive maintenance program is being followed and that any repair and replacement needs found during those activities are tracked to completion.
- Conduct frequent inspections to evaluate your area's physical conditions.
- Investigate accidents thoroughly to determine how the situation can be made foolproof.
- Actively discourage short cuts. Consistently and fairly enforce safe work procedures and safety and health rules.
- Provide continuing on-the-job training in safe work procedures and the use and maintenance of personal protective equipment.
- Make sure each employee knows what to do in case of an emergency.
- Practice what you preach. Be thorough and conscientious in following the safe



work procedures and safety and health rules that apply to the area.

### EMPLOYEE RESPONSIBILITIES

- Learn the rules. Understand them and avoid short cuts.
- Review the safety and health educational material posted on bulletin boards and distributed to work areas. If you do not understand something, ask questions.
- Take personal responsibility for keeping yourself, your co-workers and equipment free from mishaps.
- Be certain that you completely understand instructions before starting work. Avoid taking short cuts through safe work procedures.
- If you have any doubt about your safety or health when completing a task, stop and get instructions from your supervisor before continuing.
- If you have a suggestion for reducing safety and health risks, offer it. It is your responsibility to get involved.
- Take part in the employee participation system and support other employees in their assigned roles under the safety and health management system.
- Make sure you understand exactly what your responsibilities are in emergency situations.
- Know how and where medical help can be obtained.
- Report all accidents and unsafe conditions and acts to your supervisor or use the system set up to allow reporting elsewhere.